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والمرابعة

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A printer comprising:

a printing mechanism, the printing mechanism being arranged to utilize a consumable product during printing;

a sensor that generates a status signal indicative of a status of the printer;

a network interface suitable for coupling the printer to a network; and

a controller operable to send an e-mail message to a maintenance computer through the network in response to the status signal.

- 2. The printer of claim 1, wherein the sensor is operable to generate the status signal based on a remaining amount of the consumable product.
 - 3. The printer of claim 2, wherein the sensor is operable to generate the status signal based on whether the remaining amount of the consumable product is less than a threshold value.
 - 4. The printer of claim 3, wherein the consumable product is an ink ribbon, and the printing mechanism includes a thermal transfer mechanism.
 - 5. The printer of claim 3, wherein the consumable product is printing ink, and the printing mechanism includes an ink jet mechanism.
 - 6. The printer of claim 3, wherein the consumable product is toner, and the printing mechanism includes an electrophotographic mechanism.
 - 7. The printer of claim 1, wherein the sensor is operable to generate the status signal based on an error status of the printer.
 - 8. The printer of claim 1, wherein the controller is operable to cause the network interface to send the e-mail message in a Simple Mail Transfer Protocol format.
- 25 9. The printer of claim 8, wherein the controller is operable to insert consumable product data representing the remaining amount of the consumable product into a data portion of the e-mail message.
 - 10. The printer of claim 8, wherein the controller is operable to insert printer error data representing the error status of the printer into a data portion of the e-mail message.
 - 11. A printer comprising:

means for printing, the means for printing being arranged to utilize a consumable product during printing;

means for generating a status signal indicative of a status of the consumable product;

means for coupling the printer to a network; and

- means for sending an e-mail message to a maintenance computer through the network in response to the status signal.
 - 12. A method for providing status information of a printer, comprising: generating a status signal indicative of a status of the printer;

generating an e-mail message indicative of the status of the printer based on the status signal; and

sending an e-mail message to a maintenance computer through a network.

- 13. The method of claim 12, wherein the status signal is generated based on a remaining amount of a consumable product used for the printer.
- 14. The method of claim 13, wherein the status signal is generated based on whether the remaining amount of the consumable product is equal to or less than a threshold value.
- 15. The method of claim 14, wherein the consumable product is an ink ribbon, and the printer includes a thermal transfer mechanism.
- 16. The method of claim 14, wherein the consumable product is printing ink, and the printer includes an ink jet mechanism.
- 17. The method of claim 14, wherein the consumable product is toner, and the printer includes an electrophotographic mechanism.
 - 18. The method of claim 12, wherein the status signal is generated based on an error status of the printer.
- 19. The method of claim 12, wherein the controller is operable to cause the network interface to send the e-mail message in a Simple Mail Transfer Protocol format.
 - 20. The method of claim 19, wherein consumable product data representing the status of the consumable product is inserted into a data portion of the e-mail message.
- The method of claim 19, wherein printer error data representing the error status of the printer is inserted into a data portion of the e-mail message.

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